

Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja

The Foremost of Lion-roarers Amongst the Monks

[Suttas, stories and significance of Piṇḍola in the Pali sources]

A study by Piya Tan ©2009

[This study is Part 1 (§§1-2) of 2, and continues with SD 27.6b (§§3-5), “Arhats Who Became Bodhisattvas.”]

1 Piṇḍola’s lives

1.1 EARLY SOURCES ON PIṆḌOLA. Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja is one of the most colourful early Buddhist saints with a very developed hagiography (sacred biography) spanning all the major Buddhist traditions.¹ He is listed as great elder no 58 in the commentarial list of the eighty great elders (*asīti mahā,thera*) (ThA 3:205).² Later stories of Piṇḍola tell us that he began his religious life struggling with greed and gluttony [1.3], and depict him as an arhat endowed with psychic power who still errs in displaying it publicly, he matures into a great saint, worthy of emulation [2].

As an arhat, he is declared by the Buddha to be *the foremost of those monks who are lion-roarers* (A 1:23). **The Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja Sutta** (S 35.127) records his wise teachings to the rajah Udena regarding how a monk’s training prevents him from indulging in sense-pleasures.

The background or origin of Piṇḍola can be found in the following texts:

Vinaya		Cv 5.8 = V 2:110-112 ³
Dhammapada Commentary	(Dhammapad’atthakathā)	DhA 14.2.2/3:199-201 ⁴
Aṅguttara Nikāya Commentary	(Manoratha,pūraṇī)	AA 1:196-199
Thera.gāthā Commentary	(Param’attha,dīpanī V)	ThaA 2:4-6
Saṃyutta Commentary	(Sār’attha-p,pakāsini)	SA 393
Udāna Commentary	(Pāram’attha,dīpanī I)	UA 252
Apadāna Commentary	(Visuddha,jana,vilāsini)	ApA 197

The story of Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja’s psychic display is related in some detail in the Culla,vagga of **the Vinaya**. A Rājagaha seth places a sandalwood almsbowl on a high pole of extended bamboos. Piṇḍola succeeds in bringing the almsbowl down and is rewarded by the seth, who fills the bowl with choice food. When the Buddha learns of this he shows his unequivocal disapproval, and promulgates the rule that monastics should never display their psychic powers in public!⁵ [1.4]

Other than merely declaring Piṇḍola’s prominence as a lion-roarer, the Suttas are silent on this special quality, which however is highlighted in commentarial accounts of him [2.2]. In the time of **Padum’uttara Buddha** (the 16th Buddha before our Buddha),⁶ Piṇḍola is born as a lion in Himavā [the Himalayas]. The Buddha visits the lion in his cave to meditate, and the lion joyfully guards him for seven days. Later, when he leaves, the lion dies and is reborn as a man in **Haṃsa,vatī**, where he hears the Buddha teaching Dharma and declaring one of his disciples as the foremost of the “lion-roarers,” and he aspires to that position, too.⁷

¹ In Myanmar, Piṇḍola (known as Peindola there), is one of the 4 most worshipped “living” saints, ie, Shin Upagok (Upagupta), Shin Thiwali (Sīvalī), Shin Aṅgulimāla, and Shin Peindola. See Duroiselle 1922-23: 174; Dowling 1982; Strong 1992: 241 f.

² See **Aṭṭha,puggala S** (A 9.59) = SD 15.10a Intro (7).

³ Cv 5.8 = V 2:110-112; see also **Mahaka Pātihāriya S** (S 4.14) = SD 27.2 Intro (2.2) & **Miracles** = SD 27.5a (7.2). On the twin miracle, see **Miraculous Stories** = SD 27.5b (3.1.4-7).

⁴ = DhA:B (*Buddhist Legends*) 3:35-38; see also J 4:263; SnA 570.

⁵ Cv 5.8 = V 2:110 f.

⁶ Padum’uttara is the 13th of the 24 Buddhas: see **Mahā’padāna S** (D 14) =SD 49.8 Intro (2).

⁷ AA 1:197 f; ApA 300; ThaA 2:3 f.

A few of Piṇḍola's verses are found in **the Thera,gāthā** (Tha 123 f) [1.6], **the Apadāna** (Ap 50 f) [1.2.2], and **the Milinda,pañha** (Miln 393, 404) [1.6]. Both the Vinaya and Dhammapada Commentary accounts relate how Piṇḍola makes a public display of his psychic powers and the Buddha's subsequent prohibiting monastics from such displays. While the Vinaya account merely gives the Piṇḍola miracle as the circumstance leading to the promulgation of the “wrong-doing” (*dukkata*) rule against public display of miracles by monastics [1.4], the Dhammapada story presents it as a preamble to the Buddha's performing the greatest miracle in the Indian Buddhist scripture.⁸

1.2 PIṆḌOLA THE LION-ROARER.

1.2.1 Commentarial accounts of Piṇḍola the lion-roarer. The Buddha declares Piṇḍola to be the foremost of those monks who are the lion-roarers (A 1:23). We will examine the significance of this title. Although the Suttas seem to be silent on Piṇḍola's role as a lion-roarer, the Commentaries often recount his lion-roars, that is, his declaration of awakening along with his willingness and ability to remove any monk's doubts, and his actual acts of doing so. In other words, he is presented as *a model of a monk who is an allayer of doubts in a monk*.

There are no details in the Suttas of Piṇḍola's pre-eminence as a *lion-roarer* probably because such accounts, if they had existed, must have been lost. This quality of his, however, is highlighted in commentarial accounts of him. We shall here examine in some detail how he has gained this pre-eminence.

1.2.2 Piṇḍola as a lion. Interestingly, the story of Piṇḍola as the lion-roarer actually begins with his past existence as a *lion*. The opening verses of **the Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja Therāpadāna** tells us about this, with elaborations in the Apadāna Commentary. His Apadāna opens, thus:⁹

<i>Padum'uttaro nāma jino, sayambhū agga,puggalo; Purato himavantassa, citta,kūṭe vasī tadā.</i>	A conqueror named Padum'uttara, ¹⁰ self-born, foremost of individuals, dwelt then on Citta.kūta ¹¹ before Himavanta [the Himalayas].	Ap 3.8.1/50
<i>Abhīta,rūpo tatthāsim, miga,rājā catukkamo; Tassa saddam suṇitvāna, vikkhambhanti bahujjanā</i>	There I dwelt fearless, the king of the beasts of the four quarters. Hearing my roar, the masses stiffen with fear.	Ap 3.8.2/50
<i>Suphullaṃ padumaṃ gayha, upagacchīṃ narāsabhaṃ; Vuṭṭhitassa samādhimhā, buddhassa abhiropayim</i>	Holding a well bloomed lotus, I went up to the lordly bull among men, my mind focussed on the Buddha, emerging from his samadhi.	Ap 3.8.3/50
<i>Catu-d,disaṃ namassitvā, buddha,seṭṭhaṃ nar'uttamaṃ; Sakaṃ cittaṃ pasādetvā, sīhanādaṃ nadiṃ ahaṃ</i>	In the four quarters, having bowed to the supreme Buddha, the highest of men, having made my own mind bright with faith, I roared a lion-roar.	Ap 3.8.3/50

The Apadāna Commentary relates that Piṇḍola, in past existences, served various past Buddhas, accumulating merits conducive to such further births. After that, he is reborn in a lion's womb and lives in a cave in a foothill. The Buddha, out of compassion, enters his cave-den while he is out on his hunt, and sits

⁸ See **Miraculous Stories** = SD 27.5b (3.2).

⁹ The translation here is not strictly interlinear, but keeps to the English idiom.

¹⁰ Padum'uttara is the 15th past Buddha before Gotama, or 13th of the 24 Buddhas: see **Mahā'padāna S** (D 14) = SD 49.8 (2).

¹¹ That is, on its peak (ApA 301).

down there in the attainment of cessation.¹² (The Aṅguttara Commentary story adds that the Buddha does this mid-air, AA 1:197.)

The lion returns after his hunt, and seeing the Buddha Padum'uttara in his cave, bristles with joy (*haṭṭha, tuṭṭha*). Then he pays homage to the Buddha with various kinds of flowers growing in water and on land. (The Aṅguttara Commentary story says that he piled up flowers right up to where the Buddha is so that he sits on the flowers, AA 1:197). His mind, bright with faith, he protects the Buddha, roaring thrice to chase away other wild beasts. For seven days, his mind is likewise focussed on the Buddha.

At the end of the seven-day attainment, Padum'uttara Buddha emerges, and noting that the lion has gained merit conducive to spiritual attainment, rises into the air and departs for his monastery. The lion, deeply grieved at not being able to see the Buddha, dies and is reborn in a wealthy family in Hamsa, vatī. There, when he comes of age, he hears the Buddha's teaching and faith arises in him, and he regularly offers almsfood to the order headed by the Buddha. (ApA 300). [1.5]

1.3 PIṆḌOLA THE GLUTTON. Piṇḍola is not depicted as a glutton in the Suttas nor in the Sanskrit texts. Only the Vinaya and Commentarial stories have accounts of his gluttony.¹³ Here we will examine such accounts, and then attempt to resolve this apparent discrepancy of the depiction of Piṇḍola (as an exemplary monk in the Suttas and as a glutton in the Vinaya and Commentaries.)

On account of Piṇḍola's past lives, first as a lion who is devoted to Padum'uttara Buddha [1.1], and then as that Buddha's faithful devotee, he was variously reborn amongst the gods and amongst humans. In the time of our Buddha, he was reborn as the son of purohit (chaplain) of the rajah Udena of Kosambī, and was called Bhāra, dvāja. When he came of age and mastering the Three Vedas, he tutored 500 brahmin youths in them. The Aṅguttara Commentary says that Piṇḍola used to ask to receive personally the alms meant for his five hundred disciples, and would go repeatedly to houses where he had already been served, and wait there asking, "Is there food? Is there milk-rice?" On account of his gluttony, they left him. (AA 198; ApA 300). Piṇḍola left for Rāja, gaha, where, upon seeing how the Buddha and his order were showered with gifts and honours, he became a monk who knew no limits to his eating (ApA 300; ThaA 4).

Both Buddhaghosa and Dhammapāla, probably drawing from a common ancient source, says that Piṇḍola was so called because "he joined the order for the sake of food, in quest of food" (*piṇḍam ulamāno pariyesamāno pabbajito ti piṇḍolo*).¹⁴ The Pali-English Dictionary notes that the word *ulati* is a commentarial invention (neologism), to serve as a synonym for the verb *gacchati* ("he goes") (PED: sv *ulati*).

Probably for this reason, Lévi and Chavannes make no mention of the Pali explanation of Piṇḍola's name. They point out that the Sanskrit grammarians Pāṇīni and Hemacandra both recognize an *-ola* suffix, suggesting that it may be a colloquial short form of *ālaya*, meaning "abode, receptacle, store-house." They point to the example of *gandhola* which is derived from *gandh'ālaya*, "the fragrant abode," more

¹² The attainment of cessation (*nirodha, samāpatti*), ie "the cessation of perception and feeling" (*saññā, vedayita nirodha*, S 14.11/2:151). The absolute necessary preconditions to this attainment are said to be the perfect mastery of all the 8 dhyanas as well as the previous attainment of non-return or arhathood. Comys say that this state may last for 7 days or even longer (MA 1:125, 152; AA 1:152; DhA 1:109; BA 163). Immediately at the arising of the state, however, there arises in the non-returner, the fruition of non-return (*anāgāmi, phala*), and in the arhat, the fruition of arhathood (*arahatta, phala*) (PmA 1:41, 321). Only an arhat or a non-returner can experience this cessation (A 5.166/3:193 f; Vism 23.18/702, 23.49/708). On emerging from cessation, they experience the fruit of their respective attainments (Vism 708). See **Ariya, pariyesanā S** (M 26.42/1:175) = SD 1.11 Intro (4.1); **Sappurisa S** (M 113) = SD 23.7 Intro (2); also **Animitta Ceto, samādhi Pañha S** (S 40.9/4:268 f) = SD 24.19.

¹³ There is a possibility that post-Buddha monks (very likely those of the Mahāvihāra in Sri Lanka, 3rd cent BCE-4th cent CE) invented the stories of Piṇḍola as the glutton and the miracle worker. Such stories, however, should neither be summarily dismissed nor wholly assumed as canonical, in that they reflect certain monastic realities and point to a vision of proper monastic training and ideals [3].

¹⁴ SA 2:301, 393; UA 252; cf UA 68 where *ulati* ("he goes (for)") is used in the explanation of *bhakkulo* ("looking for what is edible"). See JS Strong 1979: 61-68.

commonly known as *gandha,kuṭi*, “the fragrant cell,”¹⁵ that is, the Buddha’s personal residence (1916: 231).

In other words, following its Sanskrit form, *piṇḍola* is derived from *piṇḍa-ālaya*, “a store-house of almsfood,” which aptly describes the unawakened Piṇḍola. This explanation has led **John Strong** to suggest

But the same etymology can imply something else as well. It is not just “food” that Piṇḍola stores, but food-offerings. He is, so to speak, greedy for the acts of merit of the laity. In this sense, Piṇḍola can perhaps best be conceived of as a personification of the Buddhist monk’s beg-ging bowl: he is eminently qualified to *receive* food offerings but does not enjoy them.

(John Strong 1979: 66 f)

This role of Piṇḍola, as we shall see, will gain special significance in the Mahāyāna tradition, especially that of east Asia [3].

1.4 PIṆḌOLA IN THE VINAYA. All the extant Vinayas (albeit with some variants), contains the account of Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja as a miracle-worker, whose public display of psychic power is the occasion for the Buddha’s promulgation of a Vinaya rule against them.¹⁶ The best known Vinaya accounts of Piṇḍola are found here (with references to translations by Lévi & Chavannes, 1916), namely:

		<u>Lévi & Chavannes (French tr)</u> ¹⁷
Pali (Theravāda)	V 2:110-112	1916: 233-235 (94-96)
Dharmaguptaka	ch 51	1916: 235-238 (96-99)
Mahīśāsaka	ch 26	1916: 238-243 (99-103)
Sarvāstivāda	ch 37	1916: 243-246 (103-105)
Mūla,sarvāstivāda	Divy 256.25-257.21 ¹⁸	1916: 246-252 (105-111)

The Pali Vinaya and Commentaries¹⁹ relate how a seth of Rājagaha, finding a quaint piece of red sandalwood, makes it into a bowl. Then he places the sandalwood bowl on a very high pole and challenges any holy person to bring it down. Piṇḍola hears of this and suggests that Moggallāna²⁰ retrieve the bowl. Moggallāna, however, declines and proposes that Piṇḍola himself does it. Thereupon, Piṇḍola rises into the air with his psychic power and brings the bowl down.

On learning of Piṇḍola’s deed, the Buddha strongly rebukes him for such a cheap and unworthy display of psychic power. The Buddha explains that such an act is neither impressive to those without faith in the Teaching nor to the faithful:²¹ it is like a woman exposing herself for a mere coin. The Buddha then announces the Vinaya rule against such displays before the laity.

¹⁵ See John Strong, “Gandhakūṭi: The perfumed chamber of the Buddha,” *History of Religions* 16 1977: 390-406; also Donald K Swearer, *Becoming the Buddha*, Princeton, 2004: 114.

¹⁶ Cv 5.8 = V 2:110-112; the story is given in greater detail at DhA 14.2a/3:199-203. In Comys, the Piṇḍola incident forms the prelude to the Buddha’s performance of the twin wonder (*yamaka pāṭihāriya*) [SD 27.5b (3.1.5)]: the explanation given is that the Buddha made the rule for his disciples, but not for himself! (DA 1:57; DhA 3:204; SnA 570; J 483/4:263). See JS Strong 1979, & S Sylvain Lévi & E Chavannes, “Les seize arhat protecteurs de la loi,” *Journal Asiatique* 7 1916: 233-347.

¹⁷ These pagings are from http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k93289p_image.f4.langFR; Ray 1994: 153 f uses an *offprint* (paged 1-166) of Lévi & Chavannes 1916, which are also listed here.

¹⁸ Divyāvadāna ed Cowell & Neil (1886) 12: 148-166.

¹⁹ DhA 14.2.2a/3:199-203; J 483/4:263-267. DhA account is detailed, while J is only about a fifth of it.

²⁰ Moggallāna’s presence here is significant as he is the foremost of those monks who have psychic power (A 1:23).

²¹ The full stock passage runs: “It neither conduces to faith for those without faith, nor to growth for the faithful. Indeed, bhikkhus, it conduces to the lack of faith for those without faith, and to the loss of faith of some in the faithful (*n’etaṃ bhikkhave appasannānaṃ vā pasādāya pasannānaṃ vā bhīyyo,bhāvāya, atha kho taṃ bhikkhave appasannānaṃ c’eva appasādāya pasannānaṃ ca ekaccānaṃ aññathattāyā ti*). (V 2:112, cf V 2:2)

The Cullavagga (Cv 5.8.2) records the rule that *forbids monks from displaying feats of psychic power to lay people* (the breach of which entails the offence of “wrong-doing” or *dukkata*).²²

Bhikshus, a superhuman psychic miracle should not be shown to householders. For whom-ever shows it, there is the offence of wrong-doing. Bhikshus, break the wooden bowl into small fragments, and then give them to the monks as scent-mixed ointment.²³ And, bhikshus, a wooden bowl should not be used.

Na, bhikkhave, gihīnam uttarimanussadhammam iddhipāṭihāriyam dassetabban. Yo dasseyya, āpatti dukkaṭassa. Bhindath’etaṃ, bhikkhave, dāru,pattam sakalikaṃ sakalikaṃ katvā, bhikkhūnam añjan’upapisanam detha. Na ca, bhikkhave, dāru,patto dhāretabbo. Yo dhāreyya, āpatti dukkaṭassā’ti. (Cv 5.8.2 = V 2:110 f)²⁴

The bowl is given to the monks to be broken and ground into sandal paste.²⁵ Here again, we see that it is the *display* of psychic power to the laity or unordained that is condemned, not the practice itself.²⁶ The Dhammapada Commentary account of Piṇḍola closely parallels the Vinaya account, but continues with the story of the Buddha’s performance of the twin wonder.²⁷ The Mahāyāna accounts, too, give further details. [3.1.3]

1.5 PIṆḌOLA’S ARHATHOOD. The Buddha, using skilful means, arouses insight in him, so that he abandons his excesses, and in due course attains the six superknowledges.²⁸ The Vinaya, the Saṃyutta Commentary and the Udāna Commentary recount Piṇḍola’s conversion by the Buddha. It is said Piṇḍola, whose fortune has withered away, on seeing the gifts and honours showered in the Buddha and his order, becomes a monk for the sake of almsfood. On account of great greed, Piṇḍola goes about with a large bowl, probably of turtle-shell,²⁹ from which he drinks rice-gruel, eating his meal of cakes and other foods.

When the Buddha is informed of his gluttony, he refuses to allow him a bowl-bag (*patta,thavikā*). Thus, when not using his bowl, he turns it upside down and keeps it under his bed. His constant pushing the bowl against the ground when keeping it, and dragging it out, *wears it down continually*, so that it can only hold a mere pint-measure (*nāḷi*) of food.³⁰

²² See Cv 5.37 = V 2:143; cf Niss 21.3 = V 3:243 (V:H 2:115 & = nn1-2), Pāc 40.2.1 = V 4:123 (V:H 2:415 n1).

²³ Cf V 1:203 where sandalwood is one of the five perfumes (*añjan’upapisana*) allowable.

²⁴ Interestingly, we do find, in (**Pasāda,kampana**) **Moggallāna S**, the Buddha instructing Moggallāna to use his powers to shake up Migāra’s Mansion wherein some monks are cavorting on the second floor (S 51.14/5:269-271) = SD 27.9, and the Buddha himself occasionally performing miraculous feats publicly, such as when crossing the Ganges on his last journey (D 2.1.33/2:89) = SD 9. The V Comy says that it is the miracle (*vikubban’iddhi,pāṭihāriya*) that is objected to, not the psychic power that is volitional in nature (*adhiṭṭhān’iddhi*) (VA 1203). See **Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja S** (S 35.127/4:110-113) = SD 27.6.

²⁵ Cv 5.8 = V 2:110-112 = SD 27.2 Intro (2.2).

²⁶ VA says that it is the miracle (*vikubban’iddhi,pāṭihāriya*) that is objected to, not the psychic power that is volitional in nature (*adhiṭṭhān’iddhi*) (VA 1203). We do find, eg, in (**Pasāda,kampana**) **Moggallāna S**, the Buddha instructing Moggallāna to use his powers to shake up Migāra’s Mansion wherein some monks are cavorting on the second floor (S 51.14/5:269-271 = SD 27.8), and the Buddha himself occasionally performing miraculous feats publicly, such as when crossing the Ganges on his last journey (D 2.1.33/2:89) = SD 9.

²⁷ DhA 2.1/1:161-231 = DhA:B (*Buddhist Legends*) 1:247-293: see **Miraculous Stories** = SD 27.5b (3.1.4-7).

²⁸ The 6 superknowlegdes (*cha-ḷ-ābhiññā*): see SD 27.6b (5) & App.

²⁹ *Kāpala,pattam* (SA 2:301, 393), v1 *kapallam pattam* (UA 252). Cf similar use of *kapāla* (turtle-shell, skull, frying-pan, etc) as a bowl at UA 79, 279. (DPPN says his bowl is made of dried gourd, but without any citation.) Probably it is ref to this that IB Horner’s n “Other Comys (SA 2:393; UA 252) ascribe his name to the large size of his bowl” (V:H 5:150 n2). See UA:M 699 n583.

³⁰ *Nāḷi*. Commenting on *nāḷik’odana*, Childers says, “This quantity of curry and rice eaten in a day was considered healthy and moderate, and the bhikkhu’s alms bowl to be of the size to contain it.” (DPL, sv). Cf **Doṇa,pāka S** (S 3.13/1:82) = SD 37.13, where Bodhi (S:B 177) translates *nāḷika* as “pint-pot.”

When the Buddha is informed of this significantly down-sized bowl, he then allows Piṇḍola to use a bag for it. On a later occasion, while Piṇḍola is cultivating his faculties (*indriya, bhāvanā*),³¹ he attains arhathood.³² On his attaining arhathood, knowing that whatever a disciple needs to attain has been attained by him, he roars his **lion-roar** before the Buddha himself, “Let those who have any doubt in the path and fruition [the stages of sainthood] question me!” (ApA 300)³³

The Aṅguttara Commentary gives some interesting details. It is said on the day he gain arhathood, Piṇḍola, taking his cell key (*apāpuraṇa* or *avāpuraṇa*), and going from monastery to monastery, then from cell to cell, uttering his lion-roar, “Let those who have any doubt in the path and fruition [the stages of sainthood] question me!” (*Yassa magge vā phale vā kaṅkhā atthi, so maṃ pucchatū ti*).

And again, standing before the Buddha, he made this lion-roar: “In this teaching, bhante, I have done what need to be done, I’ve reached the peak!” (*Imasmim bhante sāsane kattabba, kiccaṃ mayhaṃ matthakam pattan ti*). Hence, he is declared by the Buddha to the foremost of the monks who are lion-roarers.³⁴

And after the Buddha has so declared, says the Apadāna Commentary, Piṇḍola then recollects his past merits that conduced to his spiritual attainment, and out of ecstasy, utters his Apadāna, beginning with the words “*Padum’uttaro nāma jino, A conqueror named Padum’uttara...*” (ApA 300) [1.2.2].

1.6 PIṆḌOLA’S VERSES. Besides his verses preserved in the Apadāna (Ap 3.8/50 f), Piṇḍola is known to have uttered other verses. **The Theragāthā** contains two verses of Piṇḍola, uttered by him to a friend, to convince him that he is no longer greedy and self-seeking (Tha 123-124), which are give here along with their Sanskrit parallel in **the Udāna, varga** (Uv 13.17 f) within parentheses:

<i>Na idam anayena jīvitam n’āhāro hadayaṃ santiko āhāra-ṭṭhitiko samussayo iti disvāna carāmi esanam</i>	(<i>na ayam anaśanena jīvate (na āhāro hrdayasya śāntaye) (āhāraḥ sthitaye tu vidyate) (taj jñātvā hi careta eṣaṇām)</i>	Not by fasting is this life lived. not by food is the heart appeased. ³⁵ Food is what sustains, an accumulation: seeing this I went searching. Tha 123
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<i>pañko ‘ti hi naṃ avedayum yāyam vandana, pūjanā kulesu sukhumam sallam durubbaham sakkāro kāpurisena dujjaho</i>	(<i>pañkas tv iti yo hi vindate (nityam vandana mānanā kule) (sūkṣmaḥ śalyo duruddharaḥ) (satkāraḥ kāpuruṣeṇa dustyajah)</i>	“A mire,” such I knew this to be, this respect and homage in family: a fine dart, hard to remove, honour is hard for a false person to give up. Tha 124
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According to a late canonical account of Piṇḍola’s past lives, **the Apadāna**, eight world-cycles ago, he was a wheel-turning monarch (*cakka, vatti*) named Paduma.³⁶ The Thera, gāthā Commentary seems to identify him with **Piyāla Phala, dāyaka** (or Piyāla, phala Dāyaka) of the Apadāna, that is, ninety-one cycles ago, when he was a hunter who, on seeing the Buddha Vipassī, threw a piyal (*Buchania latifolia*) flower on his path. (Ap 140).³⁷

The Milinda, paṇha contains two other verses untraced elsewhere (Miln 398, 404).

<i>Kāye sabhāvam disvāna, vicinitvā vipassako Ekākiyo adutiyo, seti aramman’antare ti</i>	Seeing the nature of things in his body, the insightful, having examined it, lies down alone, without a companion, in the midst of sense-objects. (Miln 398; untraced)
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³¹ That is, the restraint of the senses: see **Indriya, bhāvanā S** (M 152/3:298-301) = SD 17.13 Intro (4.1) & M:H 3:346 n1.

³² Cv 5.8 = V 2:110-112; SA 393; UA 252.

³³ On this pre-eminence, A 1:23; SA 2:393; AA 1:199; ThaA 2:4; UA 252; J 4:263.

³⁴ AA 1:196; ThaA 4; ApA 300.

³⁵ See KR Norman’s n here (Tha:N 150 n119).

³⁶ Ap 8.10/1:50.

³⁷ Ap 140/169 f; ThaA 1:197.

<p><i>Niraye bhaya,santāsam, nibbāne vipulam sukham Ubhayān etān,atthāni dassetabbāni yoginā ti.</i></p>	<p>There are fear and terror in hell, there is abundant bliss in nirvana: the meaning of these two should be seen by the meditator. (Miln 404; untraced)</p>
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The Piṇḍola Sutta (U 4.6) closes with two inspired utterances (*udāna*) by the Buddha reflecting the same sentiment. [2.3]

2 Piṇḍola as an exemplary monk

2.1 PIṆḌOLA AS TEACHER. Only in the Vinaya and the Commentaries does Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja appears as a glutton [1.3], and as one who misuses his psychic power in public [1.4]. Throughout the Suttas, he is depicted as an exemplary monk. These are the two best known discourses given in connection with Piṇḍola:

<p>Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja Sutta Piṇḍola Sutta</p>	<p>(S 35.127/4:110-113) (U 4.6/42 f)</p>	<p>He explains the monk's self-restraint. [2.2] He is declared an exemplary meditator. [2.3]</p>
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2.1.1 Piṇḍola teaches Udena's harem. Piṇḍola's meeting with the rajah Udena is recorded in an important discourse, **the Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja Sutta** (S 35.127)³⁸ [3.2]. Udena is best known as the main actor in **the Sāmavāṭi Vatthu** (DhA 2.1), the longest story in the Dhammapada Commentary.³⁹ He is often called Vamsa,rājā (the king of the Vamsas).⁴⁰ The Vamsas or Vacchas (Skt Vatsa) are the inhabitants of Kosambī. In the Udāna Commentary, however, he is called Vajji,rājā (the Vajji king) (UA 382).

Piṇḍola often has his siesta in the Udaka,vana (the Water Park) at Kosambī, which belongs to the rajah Udena. (In a former life, he was a king who would spend many days in that park.) One day, Udena's palace women, who have accompanied him to the park, leave him while he is asleep and crowd around Piṇḍola to hear him teach Dharma. Udena awakens, and noticing their absence, goes in search of them. On finding the women, he is angered, and orders a nest of red ants to be put on Piṇḍola's body, but the latter vanishes and returns to Sāvattihī (SA 2:393 f). In this connection, the Buddha relates **the Mahā,nāga Jātaka** (J 497)⁴¹ and **the Guh'aṭṭhaka Sutta** (Sn 4.2),⁴² relating how in a past life, too, such the rajah had behaved in a similar manner.

The Saṃyutta Commentary says that when the king goes to fetch the red ants from an asoka tree, the ants fall on him and sting him. The women, under pretence of helping him, pick up the ants that fall from him and replace them on his body, because they are angry at his rudeness to Piṇḍola (SA 2:393). This story shows that Piṇḍola is capable of teaching Dharma, at least in a manner to hold the attention of the palace women.

However, it is Ānanda who is better known as being a very popular teacher with the palace women. **The Vinaya**, records that Ānanda, too, admonishes Udena's harem at the palace (V 2:290 f). Understandably, Ānanda, being a genial teacher, is much more popular with the palace harem than Piṇḍola is. The Vinaya records how Ānanda is offered 500 sets of robes by the palace women. Later, Udena, on hearing from Ānanda about how the monks recycle their robes, donates another 500 sets of robes.⁴³

2.1.1 Piṇḍola teaches Udena. **The Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja Sutta** (S 35.127), recounts that the rajah Udena, on a later occasion, consults Piṇḍola in the same park. Udena, notorious for his many love-affairs

³⁸ S 35.127/4:110-113 = SD 27.6.

³⁹ DhA 2.1/1:161-231 = DhA:B (*Buddhist Legends*) 1:247-293.

⁴⁰ J 497/4:375; Divy 528 calls him Vatsa,rājā.

⁴¹ J 497/4:375-390.

⁴² Sn 772-779/4.2/151-153. The story of Udena's anger at Piṇḍola's teaching the palace women is also recounted at SnA 514 f & SA 2:393. **The Mātāṅga J** (J 497) relates how Udena, in a past life, too, as Mandavya, has abused holy men (J 497/4:375-390).

⁴³ Cv 11.1.13 f = V 2:290 f; also retold in **Sāmavāṭi Vatthu** (DhA 2.1/1:218-220) & **Guṇa J** (J 157/2:23 f). See **How Robes are Recycled** = SD 37.14.

and queens, is understandably curious as to how the young monks could live without indulging in sensual pleasures, and questions Piṇḍola about it.

The Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja Sutta gives a good idea of how the early monastics train themselves in warding off sexual lust by following the Buddha's teachings a form of lovingkindness cultivation (regarding others in an age-appropriate manner), the body meditation, and sense-restraint. Udena is impressed and goes for refuge in the Three Jewels.⁴⁴

2.3 PIṆḌOLA AS MEDITATOR. Both the Pali canon and Sanskrit sources consistently present Piṇḍola, neither as a glutton nor a renegade magician, but as an exemplarily disciplined monk of an ascetic inclination. **The Piṇḍola Sutta** (U 4.6), for example, recounts his being an exemplary meditator: this short sutta is reproduced in full here:

SD 27.6a (2.3)

Piṇḍola Sutta

The Discourse on Piṇḍola

[Piṇḍola as an exemplary monk and meditator]

(U 4.6/42 f)

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Blessed One was residing in Anātha,piṇḍika's monastery in Jeta's park near Sāvattihī.

Now at that time, the venerable Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja was sitting, not far from the Blessed One, cross-legged, keeping his body upright;⁴⁵

a forest-dweller, one who goes on almsround, a dust-heap robe user, a three-robe user;⁴⁶

of few wishes, content, secluded [reclusive], not socializing, intent on spiritual effort, a proponent of the ascetic life,⁴⁷ devoted to the higher mind.⁴⁸

Now, the Blessed One saw the venerable Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja sitting not far from him, cross-legged, keeping his body upright; a forest-dweller, one who goes on almsround, a dust-heap robe user, a three-robe user; of few wishes, content, secluded [reclusive], not socializing, intent on spiritual effort, a proponent of the ascetic life, devoted to the higher mind.

Then, the Blessed One, seeing the significance of this, at that time made this inspired utterance:⁴⁹

⁴⁴ S 35.127/4:110-113 = SD 27.6.

⁴⁵ On this pericope, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10) = SD 13.3.

⁴⁶ These are 4 of the 13 optional ascetic practices: 1. wearing patched-up robes of discarded pieces of cloth or rags (*paṃsukūlik'āṅga*); 2. keeping only the three robes (*te,cīvarik'āṅga*); 3. going for alms (*piṇḍapātik'āṅga*); 4. not omitting any house when going on an almsround (*sapadānik'āṅga*); 5. eating at one sitting (*ek'āsanik'āṅga*); 6. eating only from the bowl (*patta,piṇḍik'āṅga*); 7. refusing all further food (*khalu,pacchā,bhattik'āṅga*); 8. living in the forest (*araññik'āṅga*); 9. living under a tree (*rukkha,mūlik'āṅga*); 10. living in the open air (*abbhokāsik'āṅga*); 11. living in a cemetery (*susānik'āṅga*); 12. being satisfied with whatever dwelling (*yathā,santhatik'āṅga*); sleeping in a sitting position, ie never lying down (*nesajjik'āṅga*) (M 5.9/1:30, 113.9-20/3:39-42; A 5.181-190/3:219 f).

These 13 items are all found in the Suttas but not all together in one place. See Vism ch 2 & also **Bakkula S** (M 124/3:124-128) & SD 3.15 Intro (2.1).

⁴⁷ *Dhuta,vāda*, more commonly said of Mahā Kassapa (**Caṅkanta S**, S 14.15/2:155 f), who is the foremost of those monks who practice asceticism (A 1:23).

⁴⁸ *Tena kho pana samayena āyasmā piṇḍola,bhāradvājo bhagavato avidūre nisinnō hoti pallāṅkam ābhujitvā ujum kāyam paṇḍhāya āraññiko piṇḍa,pātiko paṃsu,kūliko te,cīvariko appiccho santuṭṭho pavivitto asaṃsaṭṭho āradḍha,vīriyo dhuta,vādo adhicittam-anuyutto*. “Devoted to the higher mind” (*adhicittam-anuyutto*), constantly meditating in dhyana. The higher mind here refers to the third of the three trainings, ie, “training in the higher mind” (*adhi.citta,sikkhā*): see **(Ti) Sikkhā S** (A 3.88/1:235) = SD 24.10c. On *dhyana*, see **Dhyana** = SD 8.4.

⁴⁹ *Atha kho bhagavā etamattam veditvā tāyam velāyam imam udānam udānesi*.

*Anūpavādo anūpaghāto
pātimokkhe ca sāmvaro
mattaññutā ca bhattasmim
pantañ ca sayan'āsanam;
adhicitte ca āyogo,
etam buddhāna sāsanan 'ti.*

Not blaming, not harming,
and restraint in keeping with the monastic code,
and moderation in food,
and a remote bed and seat [remote dwelling],
and devotion to the higher mind—
This is the teachings of the Buddhas.⁵⁰

— evaṃ —

It is noteworthy that these two verses reflect the same sentiment as those of Piṇḍola's **Thera,gāthā** (Tha 123 f) and the two untraced verses quoted in **the Milinda,pañha** (Miln 398, 404) [1.6].

SD 27.6a (2.4)

Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja Sutta

The Discourse to Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja

[Piṇḍola teaches Udena to overcome sensual lust]
(S 35.127/4:110-113)

1 At one time, the venerable Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja was staying at Ghosita's Park near Kosambī.

Udena meets Piṇḍola

2 Then the rajah Udena approached the venerable Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja, and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, the rajah Udena sat down at one side.

3 Seated thus at one side, the rajah Udena said this to the venerable Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja:

“How now, master Bhāra,dvāja, what is the cause, what is the reason, that these young monks, black-haired youths, endowed and blessed with youth, in the prime of life, who have still not fully enjoyed sense-pleasures,⁵¹ live the holy life in its fullness and purity all their lives and keep doing so?”⁵²

(1) Age-appropriate relationship

4 “Maharajah, this was said by the Blessed One, who knows and sees, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one,

‘Come now, bhikshus,

⁵⁰ Here we see the pl form, “Buddhas” (*buddhāna*). **John D Ireland**: “When the plural ‘buddhas’ occurs in these texts it probably does not refer to Samāsambuddhas appearing in previous ages but to the Buddha and his chief enlightened disciples, *sāvaka-buddhā*, also called *anubuddha*, ‘the Buddha’s like,’ or ‘enlightened by following (*anu-*) instruction.’ It would apply especially to those disciples who gave out discourses, such as Sāriputta, Mahākassapa, Mahākaccana, etc, and who were regarded originally as being on an equal footing with the Teacher in respect of their liberation from defilements. Possibly the counterpart of *anubuddha* is *paccekabuddha*, one enlightened without instruction.” (U:I 1990: 136 f).

⁵¹ *anikīlitāvino* (pl, S 1:117,25 = 118,14 = 4:110,27 = 111,4), from *na-nikīlitāvi(n)* (mfn) [cf vl S I 9,6: *a-nikkīl°*], “who has not finished playing,” ie one who has not yet enjoyed (sensual pleasures) in full; S 1:9,6 (*paṭhamena vayasā ~ī kāmesu*); *kāmesu akīlita-kīlo abhuttāvī akatakāmakīlo*, SA [so E^c C^c; S^o °*kāmakāro*] = 10,20.

⁵² *Ko nu kho, bho bhāradvāja, hetu ko pacayo yenime daharā bhikkhū susū kālakesā bhadrena yobbanena samannāgatā paṭhamena vayasā anikīlitāvino kāmesu yāvajivam paripuñnam parisuddham brahmacariyam caranti, addhānañca āpādentī'ti.*

towards those old enough to be your mother, [111] mentally regard them as your mother;
 towards those old enough to be your sister, mentally regard them as your sister;
 towards those young enough to be your daughter, mentally regard them as your daughter.⁵³

This, indeed, maharajah, is the cause, this is the reason, that these young monks, black-haired youths, endowed and blessed with youth, in the prime of life, who have still not fully enjoyed sense-pleasures, live the holy life in its fullness and purity all their lives and keep doing so.”

5 “But, master Bhāra,dvāja, wanton is the mind. Sometimes,
 lustful mental states do arise towards those old enough to be our mothers;
 lustful mental states do arise towards those old enough to be our sisters, too;
 lustful mental states do arise towards those young enough to be our daughters, too.

Is there, master Bhāra,dvāja, another cause, master Bhāra,dvāja, that these young monks, black-haired youths, endowed and blessed with youth, in the prime of life, who have still not fully enjoyed sense-pleasures, live the holy life in its fullness and purity all their lives and keep doing so?”

(2) The 31 parts of the body

6 “Maharajah, this was said by the Blessed One, who knows and sees, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one,

‘Come now, bhikshus, review this very body, wrapped in skin and full of various impurities, from the soles of the feet upwards and from the crown of the head downwards, thus:⁵⁴

“In this body there are⁵⁵

- (1) head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin;⁵⁶
- (2) flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys;⁵⁷
- (3) heart, liver, membranes (around the lungs),⁵⁸ spleen, lungs;⁵⁹
- (4) large intestines, small intestines, stomach-contents,⁶⁰ faeces[, brain];⁶¹
- (5) bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat;⁶²

⁵³ *Mātu,mattīsu mātu,cittam upaṭṭhapetha, bhagini,mattīsu bhagini,cittam upaṭṭhapetha, dhītu,mattīsu dhītu,-cittam upaṭṭhapethā'ti.* This quote is untraced (either unrecorded or from lost text).

⁵⁴ In the Suttas, this practice is called *asubha,saññā* (perception of foulness). The term *asubha,nimitta* (the sign of foulness) in Comys, refers to one or other of the 10 foul objects, ie bodily remains in one of the 10 stages of decomposition (Vism 6.1-11/178 f). On details of practice, see **Kāya,gatā,sati S** (M 119) = SD 12.21 Intro (5). See also **Vibhaṅga S** (S 51.29/5:277 f), on the analysis of will or desire (*chanda*).

⁵⁵ In this meditation of parts of the body, groups (1)-(4) constitute the earth element (**Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S**, M 62.8/1:421 f); groups (5)-(6) constitute the water element (ib M 62.9/1:422). The same sutta describes the fire element as *that by which one is warmed, ages, and burns, and that by which what is eaten, drunk, chewed and tasted gets completely digested*, or whatever else that is liquid, liquefied and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself] (M 62.10/1:422); and the wind element as *up-going winds [burping], down-going winds, winds in the belly [flatulence], winds that course through the limbs, in-breath and out-breath*, or whatever else that is air, airy and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself] (M 62.11/1:422 f).

⁵⁶ *Kesā lomā nakhā dantā taco.* The meditation on these five parts “with skin as the fifth” or “skin pentad” (*taca,pancake kamma-t,thāna*) (Vism 242=8.50) forms the basic spiritual practice first taught to monks at the end of ordination.

⁵⁷ *Mamsam nahāru aṭṭhi aṭṭhi,miñjā vakkam.*

⁵⁸ “Membranes,” alt tr “pleura,” *kilomaka*, ie a pair of membranous sacs surrounding the lungs.

⁵⁹ *Hadayaṃ yakanam kilomakam pihakam papphasam.*

⁶⁰ *Udariyam*, lit “that which is in the udara (stomach),” sometimes tr as “gorge” (Vism:Ñ 8.120/-122/258 f); technically, this includes chyme (food half-digested by gastric juices, expelled into the duodenum).

⁶¹ *Antam anta,gunam udariyam karisam.* See M 3:90; KhpA 38. Later traditions add the 32nd part—*matthake mattha,luṅgam* (lit “the brain in the head”) (Kh 3, Pm 1:6 f; Vism 8.42-144/239-266): the “brain” is not listed at S 4:111). Although “brain” is usually listed last, Comys list it as no 20, after “faeces” (KhA 60; Vism 8.126/260) in the set headed by “large intestines” since they have similar or related appearances. For a fascinating discussion on how ancient ascetics obtain such knowledge of the human anatomy, see Zysk 1998:34-37.

⁶² *Pittam semham pubbo lohitaṃ sedo medo.*

(6) tears, grease, saliva, snot, oil of the joints,⁶³ urine.”⁶⁴

7 “That is easy, master Bhāradvāja, for those monks who are developed in body,⁶⁵ developed in moral conduct, developed in mind, developed in wisdom, but it is difficult for those who are undeveloped in body,⁶⁶ undeveloped in moral conduct, undeveloped in mind, undeveloped in wisdom.

But master Bhāradvāja, for those monks who are undeveloped in body, undeveloped in moral conduct, undeveloped in mind, undeveloped in wisdom, this is difficult.

Sometimes, [112] though one thinks: “I will regard the body as foul,” one still pays attention to the foul as if it were beautiful.

Is there, master Bhāradvāja, another cause, master Bhāradvāja, that these young monks, black-haired youths, endowed and blessed with youth, in the prime of life, who have still not fully enjoyed sense-pleasures, live the holy life in its fullness and purity all their lives and keep doing so?”

(3) Sense-restraint

8 “Maharajah, this was said by the Blessed One, who knows and sees, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one,

‘Come, bhikkhus, dwell guarding the sense-doors:

(1) Having seen a form with the eye, do not grasp its signs and features.⁶⁷

Since, if the eye-door is unguarded, evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and displeasure would assail you, practise its restraint.

(2) Having heard a sound with the ear, do not grasp its signs and features.

Since, if the ear-door is unguarded, evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and displeasure would assail you, practise its restraint.

(3) Having smelt an odour with the nose, do not grasp its signs and features.

Since, if the nose-door is unguarded, evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and displeasure would assail you, practise its restraint.

(4) Having tasted a taste with the tongue, do not grasp its signs and features.

Since, if the tongue-door is unguarded, evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and displeasure would assail you, practise its restraint.

(5) Having felt a touch with the body, do not grasp its signs and features.

Since, if the body-door is unguarded, evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and displeasure would assail you, practise its restraint.

(6) Having cognized a mental state with the mind, do not grasp the signs and features.

Since, if the mind-door is unguarded, evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and displeasure would assail you, practise its restraint.”

Udena’s confession

9 “Excellent, master Bhāradvāja! Excellent, master Bhāradvāja! How well-said this is, master Bhāradvāja, by the Blessed One who knows and sees, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one!

So such indeed, master Bhāradvāja, is the cause, this is the reason, that these young monks, black-haired youths, endowed and blessed with youth, in the prime of life, who have still not fully enjoyed sense-pleasures, live the holy life in its fullness and purity all their lives and keep doing so.

⁶³ *Lasikā*, ie synovial fluid.

⁶⁴ *Assu vasā kheḷo sīṅghānikā lasikā muttān*. Here there are a total of 31 parts of the body. See here (4)n.

⁶⁵ “Developed in body” (*bhāvita, kāya*) means developed in the “body” of the 5 sense-doors (*bhāvita, pañca, dvārika, kāya*), ie, having sense-restraint: see n on “undeveloped in body,” below here.

⁶⁶ “Undeveloped in body” (*abhāvita, kāya*) means undeveloped in the “body” of the five sense-doors (*abhāvita, pañca, dvārika, kāya*), ie, lacking in sense-restraint. (SA 2:395)

⁶⁷ For details., see **Nimitta and Anuvyañjana** = SD 19.14.

10 I, too, master Bhāra,dvāja, when I enter the harem with unguarded body, unguarded speech, unguarded mind, with the senses unguarded, on that occasion, too, master Bhāra,dvāja, states of lust fiercely assail me.

But, master Bhāra,dvāja, when I enter the harem with guarded body, guarded speech, guarded mind, [113] with the senses guarded, on that occasion, too, master Bhāra,dvāja, states of lust do not assail me.

Udena goes for refuge

11 Excellent, master Bhāradvāja! Excellent, master Bhāradvāja! Just as if one were to place upright what had been overturned, or were to reveal what was hidden, or were to show the way to one who was lost, or were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way, in numerous ways, has the Dharma been made clear by master Bhāra,dvāja.

Master Bharadvāja, I go for refuge to the Blessed One, and to the Dharma, and to the Order of Monks. From this day forth let Master Bhāradvāja remember me as a lay follower who has gone forth for refuge for life.”

— evaṃ —

SD 27.6a (2.5)

Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja Vatthu

The Story of Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja

[Piṇḍola gives a public display of psychic power]

(DhA 14.2.2a/3:199-203)

Translated by Piya Tan ©2009

Introduction

The story of Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja and the sandalwood bowl forms the preamble to one of the most interesting story-cycles in Buddhist literature, indeed, in all religious stories. It is arguably the best loved of Buddhist stories, as attested by the fact that the story, despite some interesting variations, are found in the Vinaya of the Theravāda, the Dharmaguptaka, the Mahīśāsaka, the Sarvāstivāda and the Mūla,sarvāstivāda.⁶⁸ It is also found in the Divyāvadāna.⁶⁹

The Pali version of the Piṇḍola story is found in the Vinaya⁷⁰ and the Pali Commentaries,⁷¹ with the most fully developed story found in **the Dhammapada Commentary**, of which the translation is given here.⁷² The full Dhammapada Commentary version is entitled **Dev'orahaṇa Vatthu** (the story of the descent of the gods, or more simply “the Descension”), which is the highlight of the cycle. The cycle opens with the Piṇḍola story.⁷³

The next cycle (or chapter) shifts dramatically into an anticlimax, with the Buddha, very soon after promulgating the rule against monks making any public display of psychic power, declaring that he

⁶⁸ See **Piṇḍola Bhārta,dvāja S** (S 35.127/4:110-112) = SD 27.6a (1.4).

⁶⁹ Cowell & Neil (edd), Divy 12:148-166; Vaidya (ed), Divy 256.24-257.21.

⁷⁰ Cv 5.8 = V 2:110-112; see also **Mahaka Pātihāriya S** (S 4.14) = SD 27.2 Intro (2.2) & **Miracles** = SD 27.5a (7.2). On the twin miracle, see **Miraculous Stories** = SD 27.5b (3.1.4-7).

⁷¹ AA 1:196-199; SA 393; DhA 14.2.2/3:199-201; ThaA 2:4-6; UA 252; J 4:263; SnA 570; ApA 197. See **Piṇḍola Bhārta,dvāja S** (S 35.127/4:110-112) = SD 27.6a (1.4).

⁷² A free tr is found at DhA:B (*Buddhist Legends*) 3:35-38, with other useful technical details: see its intro.

⁷³ DhA 14.2.2a/3:199-203 = SD 27.6b.

would perform the greatest public psychic display of all, that is, **the twin wonder** (*yamaka pāṭihāriya*). The narrators make the Buddha explain that he is like a rajah who makes laws, but he is above them.⁷⁴ (Such an idea is not found in the Canon.)

The third cycle or chapter continues with **the Ascension**: the Buddha goes up into the heaven of the thirty-three (Tāvātimsa) to spend the three-month rains retreat. It is said that during that period, the Buddha taught the Abhidhamma to his erstwhile mother, the deva Māyā from Tusita heaven, who came down to Tāvātimsa with other devas for the occasion.⁷⁵

The fourth cycle or chapter, *arguably the most inspiring and dramatic of transfiguration stories*, climaxes with **the Descension** (*dev'orahana*): the Buddha returns to earth attended by Mahā Brahmā and Shakra, and the other gods. This is the greatest of epiphanies.⁷⁶

The Story of Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja

[The Buddha forbids monastics from psychic display to the unordained]
(DhA 14.2.2a/3:199-203)

1 The sandalwood block

At one time, the seth of Rājagaha went down to sport in the river Ganges. To avoid the danger of losing his clothing, ornaments and other valuables on account of heedlessness, he put them on a latticed network enclosure.⁷⁷

Now a certain red sandalwood tree that had grown on the Ganges bank upriver whose roots were washed by her waters, fell into the river. Its roots, being constantly broken by rocks, broke into pieces. Now, a piece of the tree about the size of a water-jar, which had been ground by the rocks and washed by the waves so that it became round and smooth. Carried along by the current, it was in due course wrapped all over with saivala moss,⁷⁸ and was caught in the netting.

“What’s that?” asked the seth.

“A piece of a tree.”

Hearing this, he had it brought to him.

“What kind is it?” he wondered, and went on to pare it with the blade of an adze. Thereupon he found it to be red sandalwood of the hue of red lac.

2 The sandalwood bowl

Now the seth held neither right view nor wrong view, but was equanimous by nature. He thought:

“There is much red sandalwood in my house. What shall I do with this?”

Then it occurred to him:

“There are many in this world who say, ‘We are arhats! We are arhats!’ But I do not see a single arhat! I will use the lathe in my house and turn a bowl, which I will then suspend by a cord from a series of bamboo poles, sixty cubits⁷⁹ up in the air.

I will announce, ‘If there is any arhat, let him fly into the air and take this bowl!’

Whoever can retrieve the bowl, to him, I along with my wife and children, will go for refuge.”

Thinking thus, he had a bowl turned, suspended it by a cord from a series of bamboo poles, sixty cubits up in the air and announced,

“If there is any arhat, let him fly into the air and take this bowl!”

⁷⁴ DhA 14.2.2bcde/3:204-223. See **Miraculous Stories** = SD 27.5b (3.1.2).

⁷⁵ DhA 14.2.2f/3:224-230. See **Dhamma and Abhidhamma** = SD 26.1 (6.3).

⁷⁶ For a summary, see **Miraculous Stories** = SD 27.5b(3.2.1).

⁷⁷ *Jāla, karaṇḍakam*.

⁷⁸ *Sevāla* (Skt *śaivala, saivāla*), Blyxa octandra = Vallisneria spiralis Linn, a moss, “grassy plant growing in marshlands” (KG Zysk, *Religious Healing in the Veda*, Philadelphia, 1985: 257; repr *Religious Medicine*, 1993).

⁷⁹ A **cubit** (*ratana*), according to Udāna Comy, is that of a medium-sized man (UA 245), is twice the distance between the tips of his thumb and of his index finger with his fingers outstretched (VbhA 343), which would be about 41 cm [16 ins]. As such, 60 cubits would be about 24.5 m [about 80 ft] high.

3 The six teachers fail to take the bowl

The six teachers said, “This befits us; give it to us!”
But he said, “Fly into the air and take it!”

Then on the sixth day, Nirgrantha Nāṭa,putta instructed his disciple,
“Go to the seth and speak thus:
‘It befits only our teacher. Do not insist on our flying through the air for a mere trifle! Give the bowl to us!’” [201]

They went to the seth and said just that.
The seth replied, “Whoever can fly through the air shall have the bowl.”

Wishing to go himself, Nāṭa,putta instructed his disciples, thus:
“I will lift a hand and a foot, and will act as if I am about to fly up. Then you tell me,
‘Teacher, what are you doing? Do not show your hidden powers of arhathood to the public merely for the sake of a wooden bowl!’
Then, having taken hold of my hand and feet, pull me down, and let me fall to the ground.”

Then he went to the seth and said,
“Great seth, this bowl befits me; it does not befit anyone else. Please do not make me fly into the air for the sake of a mere wooden bowl! Give the bowl to me!”
“Bhante, the only way is to fly into the air to take it.”
Nāṭa,putta then said,
“Come then let’s leave! Let’s leave!” and led his disciples away.

Then he said,
“Now I shall fly into the air!”
So saying, he lifted a hand and a foot. Then his disciples said,
“Teacher, what are you doing? Do not show your hidden powers of arhathood to the public merely for the sake of a wretched wooden bowl!”
Then, having taken hold of his hand and feet, they pulled him down, and let him fall to the ground.

Then he said to the seth,
“Great seth, they do not allow me to fly into the air! Give the bowl to me!”
“Bhante, fly into the air and take it!”

Thus for six days, the outside teachers tried to get the bowl but simply failed.

4 “There are no arhats in the world!”

On the seventh day, the venerable Mahā Moggallāna and the venerable Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja, preparing to go out on almsround of Rājagaha, stood on a flat rock and robed themselves. Now at that moment, some gamblers had this conversation:

“Friends, before this, there were six religious teachers in the world who had gone claiming to be arhats. But it has been seven days, when the seth of Rājagaha set up a bowl and said, ‘If anyone is an arhat, let him fly into the air and take the bowl,’ not one of those who claimed to be arhats could fly into the air. Today we know for certain that there are *no* arhats in the world!”

Hearing this talk, the venerable Mahā Moggallāna said to the venerable Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja,
“Avuso, you have heard them. Their words sound as if challenging the Buddha’s Teaching. Now, you are one of great power, great might. Go fly through the air and take the bowl.”

“Avuso Mahā Moggallāna, you are the foremost of those with psychic power. You take the bowl! If you take it, I will take it, too!”

“Take it, avuso!” he said.

5 “There performs a psychic wonder

The venerable Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja attained to the fourth dhyana that is the basis for superknowledge. Emerging from it, he circled a flat rock three leagues⁸⁰ wide with his toe. Then raising it up as if it were silk-cotton, he traversed seven times in a circle over the city of Rājagaha.

Now the city of Rājagaha was three leagues wide, and the stone covered the whole city. The inhabitants thought,

“The rock will fall on us and crush us!”

Terrified, they covered their heads with winnowing baskets and so on, and hid themselves here and there. [203]

The seventh time, the elder circled the city, he split the flat rock apart, revealing himself. The crowd saw the elder:

“Bhante Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja, hold the rock firmly! Do not destroy us all!”

The elder, with his toe, kicked the rock free from him. It went right back and remained where it had come from. The elder then alighted on the roof of the seth’s house.

Seeing him, the seth fell on his chest, and said,

“Master, please come down!”

The elder came down from the air. Having invited him to a seat, the seth asked him to put down his bowl, filled it full with the four kinds of sweet foods,⁸¹ and returned it to him.

The elder took the bowl and set out in the direction of the monastery.

Then all those who had not seen the psychic display, on account of having gone to the forest or into empty houses, gathered and followed the elder, saying,

“Bhante, please show us the psychic display, too!”

So the elder showed them all the psychic display, and then returned to the monastery.

6 The Buddha reprimands Piṇḍola

The Teacher, who was following him, hearing the sound of the roar of the crowd, asked,

“Ānanda, whose sound is that?”

“Bhante, the sound is from the place where the sandalwood bowl that Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja had risen into the air and taken down.”

Hearing this, the teacher summoned him, and asked,

“Is it true that you have done this?”

“That is true, bhante,” he replied.

“Why have you done that, Bhāradvāja?” and rebuked the elder. He had the bowl broken into pieces, and had them given to the monks to be ground into sandalwood paste. Then he laid down the training rule for disciples prohibiting psychic display. [204]

[For §§3-5 & Bibliography, see SD 27.6b, “Arhats Who Became Bodhisattvas.”]

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⁸⁰ “Leagues” (*yojana*). A *yojana* is the yoke of an Indian plough (J 6:38, 42). As distance, it is as far as can be covered by a yoke of oxen, ie, about 11.25 km or 7 mi (DhA 1:108, 2:13). Thus, 3 leagues would be about 33.75 km or 21 mi.

⁸¹ *Catu, madhura* (DA 1:136; SnA 227; ThaA 68), ie curds [junket], honey, ghee [clarified butter], and molasses (or sugar-cane juice) (*dadhi, madhu, sappi, phāṇita*, DAṬ:VRI 2:99). The Vinaya lists 5 kinds of drinks as “medicine” (*bhesajja*)—viz ghee (*sappi*), fresh butter (*nava, nīta*), oil (*tela*), honey (*madhu*), and molasses (*phāṇita*) (Mv 1.30.4 = V 1:58, Pār 3.4.8 = V 3:77, Pāc 23.2/3:250 defined): this shows that the seth makes the offering outside of the proper meal-time. **The Phala J** (J 54) relates how the Bodhisattva heals those who taken poisoned fruit by first giving them an emetic, and then these four sweet drinks (prob referring to a concoction) (J 54/1:271).